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CONTENTS

		PAGE
HARVEY	JOSEPH McCULLOCH ...	1
IMAGINATION BREAKS THROUGH ...	R. H. WARD	3
NETHERLANDS	BEN ALBACH	6
TIME AND PLACE	W. M. MERCHANT ...	9
NEWS OF THE OTHERS		12
R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES		20

HARVEY

By JOSEPH McCULLOCH

Someone has yet to write a great religious comedy. If you doubt that this can ever be done, go and see *Harvey*. Not that *Harvey* is itself a great religious comedy, but it offers many gleams and glimpses of what great religious comedy might be. There is truth in *Harvey*, and Christian truth at that, but it is rare grain which has to be winnowed from overmuch chaff. Perhaps that is why several of the critics seem to have missed it altogether.

I had read some of these criticisms when I went to see the play. As a result, I was expecting to watch a dipsomaniac who saw a large white rabbit instead of the traditional pink elephant. One or two critics had taken Sid Field severely to task because he had not played the part of a man on the verge of D.T's. They demanded the slurred speech and the shaking hand of the hopeless inebriate, as the indispensable concomitants of the large white rabbit. But before the first scene was played to its curtain, I knew that the critics were wrong and that Sid Field was right.

Elwood P. Dowd, to whom the companionship of the invisible Harvey has been vouchsafed, is not a Colonel Chinstrap. It is not the love of the bottle which has brought Harvey so clearly and inexpugnably into his consciousness. It is something very much more like the love of his neighbour as himself. Elwood P. syncopates—he moves irregularly from bar to bar—and always in the company of Harvey, the six-foot rabbit. He prefers to spend his days thus, because the warmth and serene kindliness of good human relationship is thereby assured. For Elwood—and of this you can have not the slightest doubt from the moment he makes his first entrance—Elwood is a congenital lover of his neighbour. And this world does strange things to such rare men. It even throws them, as in this instance, into the constant companionship of a projected compendium of faith, hope, and charity. For such Harvey

seems to be. Harvey is the Q.E.D. or the *reductio ad absurdum* of a proposition of which the original *datum* is that human beings are here and now loving and lovable.

This is glorious material for a great religious comedy, and Sid Field and Athene Seyler are obviously made to be its exponents. They do wonders with *Harvey* ; when they are on the stage, its truth is terrific. But when they are off-stage, there is little or nothing; sometimes there is worse than nothing. The play is a curious mixture of pathos and bathos. I recommend those who are familiar with the textual criticism of the Pentateuch to spend the time, while Sid Field and Miss Seyler are off-stage, employing the well-known critical method of tracing the hands of the J. E. P. & D. in the authorship of this play. As a result of my own employment of that method, I came to the conclusion that the authoress had written what was probably a very good play at first, and that later hands had inserted clumsy and irrelevant passages, one at least in the worst of taste.

But in the midst of so much dross the pure gold is set very securely, and its quality is of so rare a kind that the rest does not greatly matter. It is difficult to assess accurately what makes Sid Field's interpretation of Elwood P. Dowd a masterpiece. His natural endowments are half the battle—perhaps they are all of it. I cannot remember having seen anyone whose smile so effectively and miraculously made the whole world kin. Nobody beams upon the world as Sid Field does. The smile spreads across his face, and suspicions, fears, all the careful and lifelong defences of your individual *persona*, melt away before it. In that smile, your own half-concern about Harvey—for one ought not to go round seeing six-foot rabbits!—ceases to disturb the back of your mind. Let but that charity infect the human race, and it would not matter what fantastic fauna shared our conscious minds. For it is charity—the genuine article—which shines out of Elwood P. Dowd. The last ten minutes of the play leave that no longer in the smallest doubt. His handling of a recalcitrant cab-driver demonstrates the nature of the Christian's crowning virtue and puts Elwood P. Dowd in the glorious company of the fools of Christ.

He turns at the final curtain to beckon his invisible rabbit, and we all laugh. Quite right, too. It is all very funny. But it is also somehow all very sad. What exactly is sad proves elusive. Someone has stood on his head—a Franciscan tumbler. And we have been amused at a droll performance. But—and there is a but—we are left with the bothering doubt that we ourselves are the right way up. And that, to say the least of it, is disturbing.

COSTUME NOTE

Excerpt from costume directions recently received:—

The Brother—boiled hessian leggings.
The Sister—wimple.
Simple ; and yet . . . and yet . . . when our hall is so cold . . . ?

IMAGINATION BREAKS THROUGH

By R. H. Ward

" I have no hesitation in stating my opinion that Charles Williams is one of the most important as well as one of the most neglected, thinkers and poets of our present century."—John Heath Stubbs.

" ' Taliessin ' is like the Pineapple. You may like or dislike that taste, but once you have tasted it, you know you can get it from no other book in the world."—C. S. Lewis.

We present, in this issue and the next, two articles on aspects of the work of Charles Williams.

In her excellent introduction to these four short plays* of Charles Williams's, Miss Anne Ridler says that he " is eccentric to contemporary writing ".

But surely this is true only in so far as Williams belonged to no particular clique and, at least in his later work, demonstrated a highly individualized talent. Even his tendency to be " esoteric " and to seem to be making " a private communication " (" not unto men ", as St. Paul says, " but unto God ") marks him as a poet quite as contemporary in his different way as, say, Mr. Auden or Mr. Gascoyne. But the reason for disagreement with Miss Ridler's remark seems to me to be a profounder one, connected with the nature of poetry as the present day defines it. Surely the pregnant feature of William's work as a whole is the revolution he underwent in mid-career, when there seems to have occurred a breaking-through of the imagination—this began to be clear in *Cranmer of Canterbury* and declared itself magnificently in *Taliessin through Logres*—which carried him out of the backwater of his earlier work (pre-Raphaelite in tone, as Miss Ridler says, though hardly " effortlessly original ", even if the word " effortlessly " could be applied to Williams's writing at any time), and bore him into the mainstream of contemporary poetry. For since Rimbaud, since Valéry, since Eliot, if not precisely since Blake, the nature of poetry has tended to be the imaginative, the visionary, summed up in the image. The substance of poetry in our epoch, that is, becomes the poetic image itself, which is different from the mind's thought or the heart's feeling clothed in simile and metaphor, and the poet who increasingly speaks to our condition is the imagist rather than the word-user. This is not necessarily a better way of writing poetry than the " old " way and we are not necessarily wise to acclaim in the " old " poets only those passages which approximate to the imagist practice; nor is it absolutely a different way of writing poetry. But it is relatively a different way, and Williams, breaking in middle-life from the old attitude and adopting the new, can be said to exemplify the general change-over from one mode to another, from the use of words to the use of images. This, it seems to me, sets him even nearer the centre of contemporary writing than poets who used the " new " methods from the first; the zeal and thoroughness with which the convert comes to the doctrine and the works are proverbial.

* ' *Seed of Adam* ' and other plays by Charles Williams. O.U.P. 6/-.

Nor was it only a question of writing in a new way; this was but the outward and visible sign of the discovery of new imaginative material. Williams began to use broad " archetypes " which are themselves complexes of images, as an image is a complex of words. These archetypes, however ultimately universal, are strictly personal to himself in the way he uses them, and are as nearly obsessional, when the fabric of his work is examined, as were those of D. H. Lawrence or Kafka. Two examples variously occur in the four plays under review. One, to be found in all of them, may be described as a male force of evil (or false good, or " magical " good) accompanied by a female counterpart or " medium " through whom this force knows and acts —a kind of spiritual gangster with his moll: the Third King and Mother Myrrh in *Seed of Adam*, for example, or Hell and Pride in *The House by the Stable* (the combination occurs again in Simon Magus and Luna in the unpublished *Terror of Light*). The other example which is a good deal in evidence in these plays, that of an archetype whose psychological affinities and provenance it would be interesting to investigate, is variously the Queen of Heaven, the Virgin, the Mother, a figure which stands barely, this side Mariolotry. Once more, these archetypes are fully contemporary, particularly in their deliberate and conscious use. They are figures of the unconscious made conscious ; and much contemporary writing is such deliberate variation on an archetypal theme.

It is the highly individual way in which this archetypal material is treated which gives Williams's work its " personality ", the reflexion of its author's own. Unfortunately, this personality is often too obtrusive; or the intellectual aspect of it is, though it must be clear that what is meant is not intellect in Shelley's sense, but intellect in the sense of a specifically mental process. That is, Williams might have been a greater poet had his mind not tended to interfere with his imagination rather than minister to it. The result of this interference is often a tortuous and tormented use of the archetypes, as also of images and words. This sometimes amounts to contradiction and confusion; as, for instance, in *The Death of Good Fortune*, where the proper difference between a negative resignation to defeat and a positive acceptance of things as they really are is sadly muddled. Here Williams seems to imply that the antithesis to resignation is merely an obstinate refusal to see things as they really are, and this refusal appears to be confusedly offered as in some sense a militant Christian attitude, in some sense evidence of what he even calls " a more substantial love ". The acceptance of what is, without which is no resurrection, without which what is cannot become something other, is so central to the Christian position that it is a little distressing to see Williams's imagination struggling to preserve it from the subtle suggestions of his curiously unforthright mind.

The tortuous and the " difficult " are by no means the same thing in poetry as the " private communication "; rather they are the negative and over-subjective aspects of the imaginative position. They destroy the universality of that position and exclude us from what, more

objectively stated, would have meaning for us and allow us to share the imaginative position. " The nature of God ", as Williams himself said, presumably without conscious irony, in *Terror of Light*, " is to have everything clear ": which still does not forbid an " esoteric " attitude; sometimes only this will serve to get a certain thing said, and sometimes it is only right that we who are outside a particular poetic experience should have to work hard to share it; and sometimes it is even right that you and I, as individuals unprepared for it, should miss that experience altogether. It is the nature of certain writers to " speak with tongues ", and Williams was one of these. St. Paul does not forbid men to " speak with tongues ", though he prefers that they should " prophesy "; but he does point out the danger of the first course (and it is one not always avoided by Williams) when he says that " God is not the author of confusion, but of peace ". The " esoteric " attitude can still have everything clear, for those who have ears to hear; but this attitude, coupled with an over-indulgence of purely mental activity, may lead, unfortunately, in a writer like Williams, to the twisted and chaotic situation and utterance which are anything but peace, or the act which belongs to it.

Nor is it any use pretending that Williams was a first-class dramatist who could afford to spoil his work by such self-indulgence. He thought in symbols, and so was attracted to the drama, which has its origin in ritual and is essentially symbolic still. But he did not as a dramatist transmute the understanding of the ritualist into that of the man of the theatre (nothing could make this clearer than *The Rite of the Passion*, perhaps his greatest missed opportunity); therefore his properly dramatic moments are rare, though they are superb when they do come: the Nativity in *Seed of Adam*, certain passages in *Cranmer*, the whole of *The House by the Stable*. Of these four short pieces, *Seed of Adam* is certainly, if unevenly, dramatic. But it would be necessary to see it and listen to it often, as it would be necessary to listen often to a chamber work by Bartók (say), before its real beauty declared itself. *The House by the Stable*, on the other hand, is a little masterpiece, considered from whatever viewpoint—as writing, as " theatre ", as an interpretation of the Nativity. It might well become, perhaps with *Taliessin through Logres*, the work by which Williams will be remembered. Its sequel, *Grab and Grace*, like *The Death of Good Fortune*, is dramatically of much poorer quality. But all four plays are interesting to read and reflect upon, especially to anyone for whom Williams is interesting to reflect upon, whether as artist or theologian; for they express his curious personality as clearly, and as subjectively, as any of his writings: his individual sense of rhythm, his unusual uses of words, his tendency to exhibitionism and the difficult for its own sake, his odd quirks of thought —and, indeed, belief; among which one could cite his forgetfulness, platonic rather than Aristotelean, of the fact that the Son of God was also the son of man, and only significant as the one by reason of being the other. Whence, it may be, the curious absence of *caritas* from the work of a soul as little *naturaliter christiana* as a distinguished Christian poet's could well be.

NETHERLANDS

By Ben Albach

Those who were present at the Edinburgh School will recall with pleasure the delightful account our Dutch visitor, Mr. Ben Albach gave us of Religious Drama in Holland. We reprint a shortened version of his discourse.

First of all I must apologize for the bad school-English in which I am addressing you. But as I expect that you will after all prefer this to my perfect Dutch, I will go on.

To begin with, I'd like to give you some idea of the position of the Church in Holland and the place we occupy in that frame-work.

Well, then, first you must know that the southern provinces are predominantly Roman Catholic, and those to the north, are chiefly Protestant, and mostly belong to the Dutch Reformed Church, the national Protestant Church, founded in the beginning of the seventeenth century. There are other Churches, such as the Lutheran, and then there are the liberal Churches on the one hand, and the more puritan reformed Church on the other. For religious drama the Puritan Reformed Church is as yet of secondary importance; the liberal Churches, on the contrary, take a great interest in it, and the National Reformed Church is also beginning to be active in this domain, especially since the war. Contrary to your country, I believe, religious drama in Holland is nearly exclusively practised by youth. It proceeded from different youth movements and is stimulated by them. But it is rather complicated to explain how these movements are organized. For the body which has most occupied itself with religious drama is the Liberal Christian Youth Organization.

We are very happy that now the Big Church itself, as the Reformed Church has been called sometimes, is taking an active part in religious drama.

Things become less complicated when I tell you that for a year now there has been much closer co-operation in the field of religious drama between all the organizations which concern itself with it. So, next winter, a two-years' training-course for producers will start; at the same time, a magazine and several plays will be published together and a prize has been offered for good religious dramas.

Religious Drama in Roman Catholic circles has its own central institute. It is in the hands of a publisher, my friend Anton Sweers, who is also a producer. This Bureau is quite apart from the Church, though church advisers are attached to it, and it maintains close relations with the different Catholic youth organizations.

So you see this is different from the position in your country. I believe that the greater contrast between the liturgical styles of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Holland is one of the chief causes of this separation. There is a little co-operation among all religious bodies, but it is not very frequent.

As I told you, religious drama in our country is practised almost exclusively by youth and hardly ever on the professional stage. As you perhaps know, we have only repertory-companies, subsidized by

the Municipalities and since the war also by the State. The chief companies are united in a semi-official organization. There is, however, no company which devotes itself entirely to religious drama, but occasionally performances of this kind are to be seen.

Religious drama as we know it, in connection with Youth Movement, has another character. This is apparent in the name: *Lekenspel*, which means "laymans play", like the word *Laienspiel* in Germany and Switzerland. It is essentially non-professional drama, it tries to revive the tradition of medieval drama, produced for and by the people with the utmost simplicity, without any commercial or personal interest, as an act of the community *Ad Majorem Gloriam Dei*.

The first impulse to the revival of this sort of religious drama was given by the German *Laienspiel*, shortly after the previous war. The socialist Youth Movement played Toller's *Masses and Man*, and at the same time companies of *Laienspieler* were founded, which revived medieval plays, a cultural treasure which had been neglected for many years. The best of these companies, directed by the actor Haass-Berkow, who from idealism, with the idea of serving better his faith, had said farewell to the stage—this company came to our country and his performances, especially of a medieval Nativity play made a deep impression.

The play is partly sung and in this performance it is worth noticing the rendering of the moment of the Birth, which is an effort to create a sort of liturgical style. The angel Gabriel comes forward with the crib and slowly places it in Mary's uplifted hands.

Players in this type of play stand for a completely primitive style of performance, out of fear that this layman's play should be mistaken for theatrical dilettantism. That is why they abandon all the trappings of the theatre and use no scenery and only very simple costumes to indicate characters, no wigs, no beards, no make-up. In fact, the danger of slipping into a certain bourgeois realism is great, but a shabby get-up has its drawbacks. Anyhow we have come to realize that we must look for religious dramas with a poetical value, and we feel more and more the necessity to interest poets in it. And then: every play requires its own style. If I may speak for myself, I believe there are many possible styles for religious drama, but on the understanding that it be played in a spirit of humble surrender, of pure truth. And in the church itself I think poetical drama will be preferred to more realistic plays. The creative fantasy of the poet can liberate us from the conventional nineteenth-century Christian platitudes.

Repertory in Holland depends much on foreign countries. We have been always very internationally minded, but sometimes we remember we have a language and literature of our own. With the revival of Youth Movement new plays appeared, notably those of Mrs. Roland Holst, Anthonie Donkers and Jef Last.

The War has strongly stimulated the interest in religious drama. From the miseries of occupation one sought consolation in Faith and

youth found in religious drama great and strong possibilities for personal experience and expression, possibilities of new forms in church life. It was no longer possible to act without the permission of the German authorities, neither for professional nor for amateur actors. And as in those years we were too stubborn to ask the Germans for consent, these measures caused some trouble in cultural life. The best actors left the stage in order to avoid membership of the so-called " Kulturkammer ", and most of the amateurs had to stop their performances, English plays were forbidden. But in the Church religious drama could go on, for there Nazi-authorities seldom ventured. Not all the religious plays we saw then fitted in with the liturgical style of the Church. Too often we had to make a virtue of necessity. But one was forced to consider the place of drama in the liturgy of the Church.

And in these dark years it was possible to establish a new tradition with the plays the poet Nijhoff wrote for us. They form the culminating point of Dutch religious drama. Nijhoff is the most important of the living Dutch poets, and his *Star of Bethlehem* is not only of value as an evangelistic preaching, but at the same time it is a drama of exceptional poetic purity. And there is indeed a great difference between this religious drama and the primitive *Laienspiele* of twenty years ago. At Christmas, 1941, while the war was raging in full force it was performed for the first time in Amsterdam in a beautiful modern church. Since then there have been performances all over the country, even in Indonesia, where, in the jungle of Java, Dutch soldiers and Indonesians joined hands to express the Spirit of Christmas in this beautiful way. Now our performance in Amsterdam has become a yearly tradition. I believe a perfect harmony has been brought about between a very precious form of Art and the essence of Christian Faith.

We hope that Mr. Nijhoff who has been seriously ill, will soon be able to finish his proposed Easter play. With this liturgical series a revival of Religious Drama began in the Netherlands at the same time as in your country.

And we are very happy to have this opportunity of coming into direct contact with the activities of the Religious Drama Society here.

We hope this contact will make the beginning of an international exchange of ideas, and that one day an international Congress will be organized in which all those who occupy themselves with these activities will take part.

And then there are still many subjects and questions left for international discussion. What is the aim of Religious Drama, must it, can it always be a work of Art ? Where are the links between liturgy and religious drama ? Between Roman Catholic and Protestant style ? What are the principal objections against Religious Drama or against drama in the Church ? And many more important questions.

> But I'm asking too much; that 's the fault of the Dutch,
> Giving too little and asking too much!

TIME AND PLACE

By W. M. Merchant

It is very unlikely that many members of the audience at a modern West End production would concern themselves with the theory—if it existed—behind the duration of time in the play. If the playwright expressed a concern to " preserve the unity of time " he would certainly be considered curiously academic. Questions of place are a little more obtrusive: the play must have some locality; but here again the concern of the audience is rarely carried further than admiration for the complex ingenuity of a permanent set or pleasure in the " variety of a witty *décor* ". Duration in time, movement in space, are thought to be the personal concern of the dramatist as he handles each particular plot, considerations of pure expediency in bodying forth each new idea. But to the Jacobean dramatist more permanent issues were involved in the time and space of a play. There is an acid undertone indicating real conflict in Jonson's prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, where he ridicules contemporary practice:—

> To make a child now swaddled, to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
> Past three score years; or with three rusty swords,
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
> And in the tyring-house, bring wounds to scars."

Twenty-four hours' space sufficed him for his plot and in spite of his experience of work with Inigo Jones on the Masques, in which he knew a Cochran-like elaboration of *décor*, his plays rarely make more free with the unity of place than to use the inner stage or the balcony as a brief variation within one locality (in *Volpone* or *Catiline*). But in this classical restraint Jonson is almost unique in Jacobean drama. Shakespeare makes but a conventional apology for his expansion of time and place in *Henry V*—the very form of the apology implies the theory behind the words:—

> " Can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France ? or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt ? "

The question " expects the answer yes ", for " this wooden O ", the Globe theatre, is the inner circle of a concentric universe; it holds in little the whole play of cosmic forces. Indeed the very word " play " is a constant pun: the prologue, *Henry V*, Act II repeats and expands it:

> " and we'll digest
> The abuse of distance; *force a play* . . .
> The King is set for London; and the *scene*
> Is now transported, gentles, to Southampton:
> *There is the playhouse now*, there must you sit."

It is not surprising that Prospero should speak of the spirits at his command as " actors " in the " revels " or an " insubstantial pageant " and that " the great Globe itself " should stand at once for the theatre and the whole visionary universe.

These are momentous symbolic claims for the humble theatre, " this unworthy scaffold ", and if we are not careful with these metaphysical hints, we shall make out Shakespeare to be a religious dramatist! But, " pardon, gentles all," that is what he is, and it is precisely the religious content of his plays and those of his contemporaries, which gives significance to this question of time and place. You don't see that? Well, then . . .

Greek tragedy, in sombre magnificence, showed its characters caught in the conflict of superhuman forces. The pity and the terror which purged the lesser beings who saw the play, were only in part due to sympathy with the fallen great one, the sufferings of a fellow mortal. The working out, in time, of his tragedy, is of less moment than the realization that within the bounds of the play, he, Agamemnon, Orestes, Oedipus, is the focus of irresistible forces. Event, crisis, the swiftly conceived action within the limit of one day becomes the central dramatic necessity.

(" Through all the years,
Immutable stands this event.")

Jacobean drama, on the other hand, shows, not the bearing down of fatality upon one person, but the interplay of two given facts: God's providence worked out in time, and man's choice, the exercise of his judgement and will. Macbeth, in the blindness of the intellect which his sin has caused, sees man's life as

" a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more."

but this is a doctrine of comfortable deceit compared with his earlier realization of the consequences of sin:—

" that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here . . .
We'd jump the life to come."

But sin is not so simple in its implications; we cannot so readily " trammel up the consequences ". Man's exercise of the will, his initial choice, works itself out to its remotest end. " We still have judgement here," to say nothing of the life to come, by the operation of " this even-handed justice ". But this process requires time: the evil in the choice and all its corrupting consequences must be worked out in the individual, in society, and in nature:—

" Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threaten his bloody stage."

Play-world: temporal world: eternity—the relation between these three is vital for Shakespearean, as for any other religious drama, and this involves the dramatist in the use of any device, anachronism, ambiguity, rapid shifting of scene, which will produce the depth of

perspective which the theology behind Christian drama presupposes. Ultimately this is seen at its clearest in the " drama " of the Mass: that which our Lord eternally pleads enters into time whenever the sacrifice is pleaded in His real Presence at the altar. The eternal focuses itself in spots of time and space. With a lower, but analogous intensity, the Christian dramatist shows the relationship between the metaphysic which he holds and the particular historic moment he chooses to depict. The writers of medieval moralities and liturgical plays understood more clearly than we have that this involved the creative use of anachronism and even of comic ambiguity. The Wakefield *Second Shepherd's Play* employs the deliberate incongruity of the shepherds' turning aside on their way to the worship at the manger, for the farcical scene of the stolen sheep hidden in a baby's cot. Yet this contemporary fun with its vivid conversational tone (" What the dewill is this?—he has a long snowte! ") merges without strain or artificiality into the purest devotion before the crib:—

" Hayll, darling dere, full of godhede!
I pray thee be nere when that I have nede."

In this same temper but with the greater self-consciousness of a revived tradition, Mr. Norman Nicholson wrote a few years ago in his *Carol for Holy Innocents' Day*:—

" The cat was let out of the bag by an angel
Who warned them and planned their get-away,
And told how Herod would make holy with death
The day that a birth made a holy day."

and Mr. T. S. Eliot makes the Third Knight say of the twelfth-century Archbishop: " I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the Civil Service."

In terms of theatre mechanics, this involves us once more in *décor* —localization in space and time. The comparative delocalization of the Jacobean stage allowed the greatest complexity of meaning which comes from a rapid sequence of scenes. The bitterly ironic comment of the Wagner scene immediately succeeds that in which Faustus has sold his soul with levity for a span of mere voluptuousness:—

" *Faustus*: Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.
. . . .
Clown: How, my soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though 'twere blood raw! not so, good friend. By'r lady, I had need have it well roasted, and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear."

The skilful designer, subduing himself to the pictorial conditions of the twentieth-century stage can assist in achieving a similar depth and ambiguity of reference. When Mr. Roger Furse takes the pre-Christian tale of *King Lear* and points its Christian implication, its natural theology leading to a doctrine of purgation and redemption, by means of his designs which echo the form and costumes of the Winchester Bible, he is collaborating with Shakespeare in a long and honourable tradition, a tradition of the divine anachronism, eternity in space and time, God in Flesh, " infinite riches in a little room ".

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

From **Hempton Field, Chinnor, Oxford,** comes news of a brave venture. Here it is.

We think you should have a report on our Christmas pageant—as an experiment in religious drama. We did it free in Thame Market-place—with the most wonderful help and co-operation from everyone we approached. A special stage was built for us—a microphone and loud-speaker, ditto—1,000 programmes (as enclosed) printed and given to us, just to mention a few items—a wonderful experience throughout.

Three teams co-operated—three choirs arrived singing carols and led by 100 children with painted lanterns. We mimed the scenes on the stage and various narrators read the script (enclosed).

The audience was variously reported as 1,000, or 2,000—even if the lower figure it was terrific and very quiet and reverent. Its size was slightly our undoing, as it surged up too near the stage and rather blocked the loud-speaker and the view of the stage to those farther back.

We learnt a lot—and everyone is saying "next time" we'll do this and that so the keenness is there.

That some were troubled was shown by the number that processed past the Crib after, and (incidentally) gave us an unasked-for collection of £19! It was also said to be the first time Church and Chapel had co-operated publicly in the town.

The *Church Times* sent a reporter who made sundry kindly comments, and I am told an article by H. Massingham has been accepted by *Time and Tide.*

As a dramatic method it has, I think, been proved possible—when we have profited by the inevitable beginner's mistakes. As religious "propaganda" the mere offering of such a big undertaking free to everyone was definitely worth while.

The idea originated with Miss Bedding, the Matron of the Thame Cottage Hospital, and she was responsible for most of the local arrangements in Thame itself, and produced Part II, the Nativity itself.

I wish these few comments could give you any idea of the joy and inspiration many of us found in the undertaking.

DOROTHY N. L. LEVERKUS.
GWEN LAVERS.

Willesden Green. Miss Mary Taylor writes:—

Rarely is one privileged to see a Nativity Play in which a deeply devotional spirit is allied to excellent dramatic presentation, and it was therefore a great joy to see the play which was performed in St. Andrew's Church, Willesden Green, on December 11th and 12th, by children from St. Andrew's Junior Schools. It was exceptional in that the careful exploitation of every dramatic possibility intensified the spirit of worship from the first scene in a Jewish School, where the reading of the prophecies concerning the Messiah served as a prologue to the play, until at the end, after the Presentation of the Holy Child, players and congregation joined in adoration of God with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

With the exception of the first scene, already referred to, the scenes were dramatic representations of the well-known incidents, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Inn, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men, and each was introduced by the reading of the appropriate passage from the Bible.

Presenting a play in a church has many disadvantages, but in this one full use was made of all means of intensifying the dramatic appeal. There were a variety of exits and entrances available, and by clever use of these an element of surprise was obtained, which is no small achievement when one is dealing with such well-known material. The use of careful grouping, the life and movement and colour of the scene in the Inn contrasting with the quiet scene which had preceded it, and the use of varied and very effective lighting heightened the drama, which was still further

enhanced by well-chosen incidental music. The play owed a very great deal to the excellence of the costumes. To have acquired so many, since more than a hundred children took part in the play, must have been an immense task in these days.

Perhaps one of the most impressive features of the play was the use made of Angels; they were with us from the moment that the Angel sent from God ran (No, she was a dancer: she *flew*) on God's errand, through the darkened church to the steps of the Altar, until at the end the Angel led the Blessed Virgin with the Holy Child to present Him to the priest. With their absorbed expressions, their beautiful dresses, and their calm assured movements they were about and around us all the time.

Miss Freda Collins, who produced the play and Miss Dorothy Wilkins, who assisted her, are to be congratulated on an excellent and highly dramatic production, in which, at the same time, the devotional aspect was never for a moment obscured.

"Out of the Wood" In February the Iona Youth Trust presented a new play in the Athenæum Theatre, Glasgow, to an audience specially invited to criticize it before its production on tour to church and village halls. Written by Oliver Wilkinson, directed by John Gibson, and based on study and discussions among the staff and members of classes in Community House, Glasgow, *Out of the Wood* is "an attempt to stress the need of the political responsibility of Christians to-day".

It is, perhaps, one of the characteristic virtues of Community House that it concerns itself directly with the day-to-day lives of the people it knows and exists to serve, and underlying this play is a passion for practical action—the expression of the Christian's duty to his neighbour—in the fields of government and government services—which are, it appears, usually ignored by the Christian citizens of Glasgow. There is, of course, room for plays which satirize the Laodicean habits of those many of us who are hearers only and not doers of the word; and *Out of the Wood* has some clever passages levelled at various aspects of modern life including the attitude of organized Christianity to social evils, which may shock some people out of apathy or complacency. But if the play fails in its avowed intent it is because none of the play's main characters is a Christian.

The Devil, indeed, appears in the guise of a church dignitary, but there is no one qualified to deal with him and sort out his lies from his truths. In his own right (or wrong) he loses abysmal sublimity through being presented and accepted in the play as a projection of the mind of man (a tactical device he must find very useful these days). But instead of Christians we get three types: an ordinary decent family man, full of human sympathies and subscribing to some Christian principles; an idealistic schoolgirl avid of learning; and a tough disillusioned adolescent (a real portrait this last). Together these three, in their gropings towards truth and the bettering of the world, stumble on a cross, which they acknowledge as symbolic of what they must take into the hurly-burly of national, local, and international politics. These citadels successfully withstand their assault; frustrated and taunted by the ecclesiastical devil, they realize that they depend on something outside themselves and they resolve to deal with the particular case of human misery under their noses "at their own level"—by ringing up the Sanitary Inspector. The first step is taken, and the play ends with their driving off the devil and resorting to prayer, which somehow they have come to feel is necessary for the further prosecution of their crusade.

The play is full—too full—of ideas not followed through; one spectator had the feeling that the basic discussions might have reached a more conclusive stage before the play was written, and that of the different classes concerned a theology class should have taken a more responsible part. Because the whole shape of the play begs important questions. It is, for instance, reasonable to doubt that ordinary people with a social conscience will, by taking thought and elementary action in politics, come to an acceptance of the Christian Faith; thus the religious value of the play is seen to be much less than it might be. The way out of the wood is not made clear, perhaps because we can't see it for the trees. But this production is a sign of impatient

life and a welcome portent of awakening awareness to the challenge of the world to Christians. It is to be hoped that Iona Youth Trust will one day sponsor a dramatization of the situation from the opposite angle.

T. G. B.

ALL THE REST

Bristol. The Guild of Cathedral Players, which was formed primarily to present religious plays suitable to Church seasons, performed *Murder in the Cathedral*, by T. S. Eliot, in the nave of Bristol Cathedral. The performance is equally a religious service and so beyond the scope of critical consideration. The stage setting was of the simplest, with the visual aids to emotional effect consisting of the soaring pillars of the Cathedral itself and the colourful costumes made by the working party of the Guild. The spotlight picking out the players as they made their way through what one automatically calls the congregation rather than the audience in the blackened Cathedral, the smell of incense lingering after the procession, Becket's Christmas sermon, the singing of the choir, remote and mystic, and the surging beauty of the Cathedral organ, all induced a sense of participation in an impressive religious ceremony. This is not to imply that the dramatic potentialities of the play were neglected. A passionate sincerity was the key-note of the performance, and the verse was spoken with unhurried and intelligent elocution which went far towards defeating the Cathedral echo.

Ipswich. From Ipswich come accounts of two presentations.

Year by year, on their permanent stage in the great south aisle of St. Matthew's Church, Ipswich, the St. Matthew's group of Players render for the Epiphany offering an impressive Pageant Play. For 1949, they chose " Kings of Judea " from *The Man Born to be King*, by Dorothy L. Sayers. All concerned had been meeting for three months prior to the performance and had fully discussed the play before rehearsals began. A working party of parishioners made the dresses under expert guidance. During the mid-week evenings of January 5th, 6th and 7th, about 1,000 people witnessed the finished performances. In a programme-note, the players thus described their intention—" The St. Matthew's Players humbly present ' Kings in Judea ' in the hope that the play will arouse in people a desire to read their Bibles to discover the real Jesus."

The project so earnestly conceived was excellently carried out. The anonymous cast was extremely well chosen. The questions of lighting and music had received careful attention. There was no untoward circumstance of weather or of breakdown in health to spoil the finished effect. One can freely congratulate all concerned with the play on the success of an outstanding effort—and look forward to their proposed Passiontide play, *In Three Days*, in Holy Week.

C. E. J. H.

(From Rev. C. E. J. Houghton, Reader for the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich of Plays for Performance in Churches.)

The Cuddesdon Nativity Play was presented in St. Mary-le-Tower Church, Ipswich, on December 29th, and the two following days. It was produced by the Rev. P. A. Welsby. I think one of the outstanding and impressive points about this production was the natural reverence and serenity of those taking part. A second feature was the absence of anything of a " pretty-pretty " nature, so that clear and beautifully realistic presentation was given. The Visitation scene, with Mary's recitation of the Magnificat, was a very moving moment in the play, and the dramatic interview between Herod and the Chief Priest and Scribes presented in miniature the stark and cruel worldliness of the opposition to the Messianic coming. The climax of the play was, of course, the final tableau. Out of the silence of the darkened church came the cry of three voices: " Blessed be God! " " Blessed be His holy name "

" Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!" The choir began singing the simple and haunting carol " Lullay my liking ", and as they proceeded the lights very slowly faded up until the stage, with its tableau of the Nativity, was a blaze of light. Then came the procession of the shepherds and the kings, making their entrances and paying their homage with all the dignity, yet humility, that must have characterized them over 1,900 years ago. It was good to see such a play presented in church and it proves what can be done with sufficient thought, imagination, and care. Those who are sensitive to " atmosphere " would have been impressed by the tense stillness on the part of all three congregations—a stillness which no one could doubt was a worshipful attendance and devotion. To many the play brought home aspects of the story which they had never previously perceived in their full significance. The gratitude of all is due to those who, with much hard work, skilfully contrived so living and beautiful a presentation.

Putney. From *Forward*, the magazine of the Parish of Putney, comes the following report.

The Stable Manger, a hitherto unperformed play by Miss Jessie Powell, was a difficult and enterprising choice for the producer and her cast, but the result has given general satisfaction. The members of the Dramatic Guild have made great strides during the past year, they were enthusiastic about the play, and the principals gave animated and convincing interpretations of their parts. Choral-speaking is a difficult art, but the choruses were audible and the meaning of their lines came through. Lighting and colourful costumes gave pleasure to the eye.

The play was also a test for the audience. Those of us who came expecting to be pleasantly soothed by a conventional Nativity Play were startled. We had to use our intelligence and see the fact of the Incarnation in relation to our lives. That the followers of the Babe born in a hard stable manger must accept the cross and the hard way, was the theme. In the arguments against the Christian way of life put forward by the semi-chorus we recognized, not only present-day clichés, but the conflicting voices in our own hearts. Gabriel, the God-guided man and the Seekers taught us that we must wait upon the Lord and listen. Then the final answer was given at the climax—the most moving moment of all—when as " The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us " was spoken, the whole cast fell on their knees in humble adoration before the manger. As we went away we could silently echo in our hearts the closing words—" Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation ".

K. B. B.

Addiscome. The *Croydon Advertiser* gives the following notice:—

How imaginative lighting, sensitive direction, and intelligently chosen music can graft distinction on to a mediocre play was well demonstrated by the Fellowship Players (Broad Green) when they presented Henzie Raeburn's *The Beginning of the Way*, in St. Mildred's Church, Addiscombe, on Thursday and Friday.

No curtains to mark changes of scene were possible, since the play was acted in church. Instead, the darkness which signified those changes, and in which adjustments were made to the set, was subtly and satisfyingly filled with apt, inspiring music. When this darkness fell on the last tableau of adoring figures round the Holy Crib, thrilling crescendos of the " Hallelujah Chorus " were cleverly symbolized in light brightening on the simple altar cross, until the church was filled with exultant sound and light.

Langton Matravers. The *Church Times* writes:—

The Parish of St. George, Langton Matravers, of which the population is less than a thousand, has presented a Nativity Play which has brought full congregations both to its own church and to the considerably larger churches of Kingston and Wareham nearby. For the performance at Langton nearly half the population of the village was in church. The actors, local people, were all known to the audience. This was

the third year that the St. George's Players have given revivals following the original texts, of medieval mystery plays. . . . The Langton Nativity Play might have been called the " Quarrymen's Play ", for it was from this remote corner of Dorset that the stone for old churches all over England was taken, and many of the players are from quarrymen families.

Purbeck stone was the only back drop for the players of Langton. There was no special lighting, no apron stage, and little or no furniture but what the church provided. The church was their stage and they used the whole of it.

Bickley and Widmore. *Bromley and Kentish Times* writes:—

" The Bickley and Widmore Guild of Players, whose presentations of religious drama go back almost to the time when the revival of Nativity and other religious plays was regarded as a dangerous innovation, this year succeeded once again in giving fresh interest to an old, old story.

" The most interesting scene, from the dramatic point of view, was the one played in a public room of the inn at Bethlehem. The producer handled this with a boldness that was refreshing, and was justified by the result. Introduced by the music of Martin Shaw's ' Make we merry ", it was a scene of crowded and continuous animation, with drinking, gaming, drinking-songs and general merrymaking; and it was against that unusual but credible background that the story of Mary's arrival at the inn was unfolded.

" The rest of the play, especially the superb pageantry of the Adoration scene, showed once again that the Guild have little to learn in the use of colour, lighting, significant movement or effective grouping.

" One point on which the production seemed seriously open to criticism was in the changing style of treatment. In one scene, for instance, the producer was obviously aiming at realism, in another at decorative effect, and there seemed no adequate reconciling principle. Hence, the final impression left on the mind was of a brilliant patchwork rather than of a unified and coherent whole."

Whittlesey St. Andrew's. The Parish Magazine contains the following account:—

" The Nativity Play *Nowell*, which was performed by the Companionship after Evensong on Sunday, December 19th, was an experiment in Religious Drama which we hope will in future be repeated on a more ambitious scale. The word ' family ' is frequently used in connection with the activities at St. Andrew's, and this play was certainly a family affair, fathers and mothers singing in the choir, and children acting in front.

" Those who acted in it have not had their names published in connection with any definite part, because they did not act from any personal motive, but as a team working on a devotional exercise. It was the first time that this group of young people had worked together as a dramatic team, and from a producer's point of view they were an excellent caste. The language of the play was difficult and archaic, but nearly all were word-perfect by the third rehearsal. They were all regular and punctual, and those with small parts were as faithful and serious as those with larger parts.

Harpenden. The *Herts Advertiser and St. Alban's Times* report favourably on Ghéon's *Christmas in the Market-place*.

" An unusual Nativity Play was presented by members of the St. Nicholas Religious Drama Fellowship in Lourdes Hall, Harpenden, on Tuesday.

" Produced by Mrs. G. W. Gotts, the play, *Christmas in the Market-place*, translated from the French, depicts a band of French gipsies who rest in the market square of a French town on Christmas Eve. While they are having their evening meal, the

villagers come to gaze at them and are later entertained by the gipsies with an impromptu Nativity play. Between scenes the young son of the family addresses the village folk until the rest of his family are ready to continue with their play.

Each player takes a dual role—that of a gipsy and a character in the play and members of the Fellowship undoubtedly made the most of these parts."

Forest Gate. A charming response to our January editorial comes from All Saints, Forest Gate, enclosing a programme of the Coventry Nativity Play as performed by the children and choir of the church. The Vicar writes:—

"DEAR SIR,

In the light of the concluding sentences of the editorial in the January edition of *Christian Drama*, I venture to send the enclosed news, not that I think it worth recording, but in response to the appeal to make the magazine a family newsletter. At the same time one hopes that local news will never squeeze out the excellent articles at present appearing.

Yours truly,
J. D. JOHNS."

We wish we had known beforehand : please let us come next time.

Sheffield. Miss Keily's expert work is being carried on in a striking way in her absence. Before she left Sheffield in September she established a panel of producers to continue her work. These people have not only been trained by her in the technique of producing, they have caught the spirit and know the purpose and have the will to attempt to carry it out.

Miss Margaret Marsden produced *The Stranger at St. Hilary* at St. Bartholomew's. It was played in the church after evensong on a Sunday evening before Christmas. There was no stage, no scenery to be seen. The Verger busied himself with the hymn-board, one of the sidesmen came forward to converse with him about the coming play and then we found that was part of it and the whole church was the stage. The pulpit was used and the altar rails; the chancel was at one time the inn and at another the stable. The Archangel's voice came from the back of the church which drew the audience into the life of the play itself.

At St. Thomas, Brightside, Miss Kathleen McLaurin produced *Christmas in the Market-place* with members of her youth club and other parishioners. It was performed in the church hall, not in itself a prepossessing building, but the gipsy fire by the gipsy caravan was glowing and our imaginations were so used that we became part of the crowd on the road to Bethlehem for the Roman census. The road was thronged with people and with sheep—for a shepherd was also on his way to Bethlehem—although there were only two actors on the scene at that time.

The Rev. Frank Glendenning produced *Sons of Adam*, by Philip Lamb, with the Cathedral Youth Club. There is an account of this elsewhere in this journal.

Mr. and Mrs. Dutfield produced *A Nativity Play*, by Nora Ratcliff, at Walkley Methodist Church. This play is an ambitious one involving as it does a great many characters. In these days of numerous church activities, it is hard to collect even half a cast for rehearsal, but by superhuman strength difficulties were overcome and a very worth-while performance achieved. The play held a large audience, although no doubt some of the good lines spoken by the shepherds went direct to the stars they were addressing over our head, but we all take what we can and leave the rest in any good play.

Apart from the work of the panel of producers, the Rev. Frank Glendenning has given some talks and addresses on Religious Drama in the city, and the Christian Community Players, under the direction of Miss Keily, have been touring Sheffield this Christmas with *The Journey of the Three Kings*, by Henri Ghéon, and *The Ox and the Ass*, by Hilary Pepler. They have been to nine parishes, an Almshouses chapel, Mother and Baby Home, S.C.M. in Schools Conference, and "The Woodthorpe

Arms". The last was an experiment in evangelism which has more than the new value of a "Nativity Play in a pub". When we arrived the small stage was occupied by a crooning pianist and a man playing six drums. Punctually at 8.50 p.m. the stage was cleared and ready for the Rev. E. R. Wickham, Industrial Chaplain, who in two minutes introduced the play and in another five gave the audience the Christmas Gospel. Then the Christian Community Players presented *The Ox and the Ass*. In twenty minutes the play was over, the crooning pianist and the one-man band returned and the audience drifted back to their usual world. Of what value we may well ask? The local reporter seemed to find it in the fact that less beer was drunk that night. That is doubtful as one young man was certainly making up for lost time after the play was over. But how can we tell what came back to their minds on Christmas Day? The Holy Spirit calls all things to our remembrance and we must leave it at that. At any rate the barman was immensely relieved to have half an hour's respite from the crooner.

Another member of the Sheffield Panel of Producers, the Rev. Frank Glendenning, produced Philip Lamb's *Sons of Adam* with members of the Sheffield Cathedral Youth Club. This was a bold experiment, as not only had none of the members of the cast done any acting before, but in addition, not all by any means were regular church-goers. The producer's aim was clearly to introduce the youngsters to something which they could get their teeth into, and this they appeared to do with remarkable facility. Frank Glendenning claims that the most valuable and interesting part of the whole proceedings was during rehearsals, the latter of which tended to be better than the actual production. The type of audience which saw the play on one night at any rate, tended to unnerve the players!

Kathleen McLaurin (another member of the Panel) writes this: "The performance of this Youth Club was beautiful and moving in parts. There was some lovely group-ing, and an interesting lack of elaborations in scenery and costume. . . . Perhaps it was a trifle too stylized and formal. Should not the Kings really let themselves go and poke fun at the audience?

"It was evident that the players had a good realization of what they were trying to portray. Their accomplishment lay in the spirit and sincerity of their performance. It is surely encouraging that a difficult play like *Sons of Adam* should be done so effectively by an inexperienced group of young people."

The fact remains that the production was not polished, simply because of the inexperience of the players. But they made a heroic attempt as all the discerning in the audience agreed. The interpretation of the play was full of interest. Some of the choric speaking was quite delightful.

Bognor Regis. Freda Collins writes:—

"Knowing nothing of the play, the company, or this particular church, I attended on January 22nd, a performance of *The Coming of Christ*, by John Masefield, at St. John the Baptist's Church.

"The church was crowded and the production—lights, costume, and church setting, was excellent. The acting was of high standard for amateurs, and the music, although ambitious, on the whole was successful. Yet no responsive glow lighted within me.

"What was missing? Did the fault lie with me, or with the company, or with the play? Each individual must examine himself, but my own impressions of the play were depressing. Masefield is a poet, and I cannot presume to criticize his verse; but I do venture to question his theology. My main concern is that others seeing the play might not do so, remaining content with the feast provided for eye and ear, uncritical of the teaching. If the first work of Christian drama is to portray the truth concerning God as far as we know it, is there any excuse for us to dramatize doubtful theology, however impressively it may be clothed?

"Yes, it was a first-class production, but I was distressed at the choice of the play for performance in church."

Staveley. Staveley's press reports:—

"In tackling the Bernard Shaw *St. Joan*, Staveley Church Players have fully deserved the confidence of their producer the Rev. N. McCurry, who for the past four months has been busy with local talent . . . performances have been well booked."

Cheddar. The Correspondent of the *Mendip Gazette* writes thus:—

"As I sat in Cheddar Church watching the Nativity Play *Come Ye to Bethlehem*, by Irene Caudwell, I realized that here in our village there is enough talent to found 'what I have wanted to see for twenty-five years', a real dramatic society.

"The rural Community Council of Somerset are ready and willing to help in this matter and Cheddar should be the centre of an intellectual renaissance in art, drama, and music.

"In the production of this play, there were the qualities of great acting and in the words of the stage and actor, they 'got it across' to the audience."

Isle of Man. The St. Thomas Players send the following details:—

"E. Martin Browne's *The Story of Christmas in Mime* was presented by the St. Thomas Players in their church on Sunday and Monday evenings to packed congregations. Special features of this presentation were the Prologue beginning with the Prophecy of Isaiah and the verse-speaking Angels preceding the actual presentation of the Nativity Story, which was beautifully told in Mime, readings and with Carols. The special lighting effects were most impressive, entrances were made through the congregation from all parts of the church bringing the people into actual worship with the Players. The costumes were very beautiful and as authentic as possible, and the general production reflected great credit on the producer.

"The singing was excellent and most appropriate, being maintained by a double quartette drawn from the church choir. This was a most fitting beginning to Christmas week and it is hoped these players will repeat this performance next year when those unfortunate people who could not get in the church will have a chance to see it."

St. Thomas's, Regent Street, presented a programme of *Drama for Epiphany* on January 25th, 27th, and 28th. It was opened by the Wandsworth Drama Group's production of *The Coventry Nativity Play*, directed by Eric Newton. Mr. Newton (not the art critic) has done wonders with the youth club who form this group. The grouping, lighting, and movement were effective, simple, and adaptable to any hall or church. But the chief excellence was the quality of joy and excitement, throughout the whole company which is so essential to a Nativity and yet so rarely found in church. To have elicited this, and yet to have seen that every line got its due value, measure, and distinction was a great achievement.

Finally, came *The Crusader*, devised and produced by Helen Wingrave. The Crusader, asleep at his vigil, dreams of temptation by a white and a red dancer, and of his rescue by Faith, who descends from a stained-glass window. The outworn story was not redeemed by any freshness or sincerity of approach, and the effect was unconvincing.

J. S. S.

BRIEFS

Boston, Lincs. Zion Methodist Church send us the news of performance of Henzie Raeburn's *Beginning of the Way* to good congregations for all performances and to a packed church on three nights.

Petertavy, Tavistock. The parish gave Martin Browne's *Christmas in Mime* for for one performance only, in church.

St. Agatha, Brightwell. *Nativity play.* Those who were present in church on December 21st or 22nd had an experience which will not be easily forgotten. There was shown to them with great reverence scenes connected with the Birth of our Lord. They saw how the promise of God to send a Saviour was kept. Everyone taking part no matter their age or sex did so with dignity and reverence. The passages from the Gospels describing the events as they occurred were read with restraint and yet showed feeling. The choir which were hidden sang well. The whole was the result of very careful and painstaking rehearsal and practice.

R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES

OUR TRAVELLING ADVISER REVIEWS HER WORK IN 1948

Summary

Two Summer Schools organized: Chichester, one week, July; Edinburgh, ten days, at the beginning of September.

Four Religious Drama Week-end Schools: Liverpool Diocese, April; Southwark Diocese Youth Fellowship, April; Poole and Parkstone Religious Drama Centre, May; Belfast, R.D.S. of Down, Dromore and Connor, October.

Course of Six Classes in Acting: Putney Church Drama Guild, May–June.

Half-day of Religious Drama at C.M.S. Youth Conference, Reading, September.

Formation of Company: "The Commoners", and production of *Sons of Adam*, by P. J. Lamb, in eleven London churches and cathedrals.

Eighteen Meetings and Conferences, covering a wide area from Glasgow to Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, but the majority in the London district.

Five visits, mostly taking rehearsals, and a number of religious plays seen with view to criticism.

This summary represents nine months' work, as for the first three months I attended the British Drama League Full-time Course for Producers. This I found most valuable as most of my work consists of teaching others, with little opportunity of learning and practising this art consecutively. I recommend this Course to producers of some experience.

Schools

I consider that our National Summer Schools are one of the most valuable pieces of our work. The task of organizing is somewhat heavy, but repaid a thousandfold. Not only do the students learn the technique of production, but one sees over and over again how their whole conception of the subject is revolutionized, especially where choice of play is concerned. The need for a theological basis is realized, with the result that several students have left the schools intending to take a course in theology! As for the technical hints, I find them being put into practice all over the country. I was amused at recognizing shades of Pamela Keily and Douglas Remington in the skilful erection of a beer-box stage of various levels made to harmonize with the structure of a church in Hampshire.

Week-end Schools

These have great value as an introduction to the subject. They are arranged by me at the request of and in co-operation with a county, diocese, or society. Those mentioned here were taken by myself as tutor, with or without a second tutor to share the sessions. Belfast and Dublin must have a word of praise for their delightful enthusiasm in the midst of incredible difficulties due to the inevitable religious prejudices. Yet both groups organized useful week-ends and gave me a wonderful welcome, and they always send a contingent to our Summer Schools.

Meetings and Visits

I seldom have the opportunity of witnessing the results of the many lectures and talks I give. People always seem full of enthusiasm at the time, and one trusts that this will bear fruit, but the following up can usually only be done through the office, and I long for the day when County Religious Drama Advisers will be available not only to start, but to follow up these potentially keen groups.

Regions were dealt with in a previous issue, and we are hoping for another Regional Conference in the autumn.

Training

The majority of people I come across, whether at week-end schools or in their church groups, approach religious drama as a means of expressing their Faith, and they have little or no dramatic experience.

This is where the need for co-operation with County Drama Organizations should come in. The majority of counties have a County Drama Committee, usually attached to the L.E.A., and many counties have one or more County Drama Advisers. These committees and/or Advisers are seeking to raise the standard of amateur Drama by providing training for producers and actors in their own locality and at a moderate charge.

It is surely in the interest of Church people, realizing their need for dramatic technique in order to take any part in religious drama, to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by their County Authorities. Having learnt some of the basic principles of the art of the theatre, students would then find it easier to grasp the full implications of *religious* drama.

Derbyshire has given a lead for further developments along these lines.

In February of this year, the County Drama Adviser, Mr. Colin Whyte, organized a Week-end School of Religious Drama at Matlock Bath, in co-operation with the R.D.S. The Rev. Douglas Remington and myself were the tutors. Entry was open to all and sundry, and at the end of the school the students urgently requested Mr. Whyte to arrange future schools of this kind, which he hopes to do.

On March 11th–14th the R.D.S. is co-operating with Monmouth Drama League for a Week-end School at Newport, Mon. The lecturers will be Mr. Martin Browne, R. H. Ward, and myself. Here we expect to find students who have considerable dramatic experience, and we hope that the School will encourage a wider understanding and appreciation of religious drama.

Religious Drama Companies

Religious Drama can play an important part in the life of a club or parish, and there will always be the need for large productions from time to time, when a considerable number of the club or congregation are united for a period to work on a Christian play.

Side by side with these activities I am sure it is important to encourage the formation of small groups from within the church community who will work as a team over some years. This is the only way of attaining any standard of artistic effort, and as they gradually master the art of acting, their ability will increase. If such a company can tour its productions, so much the better for itself and the neighbourhood. Requests for *good* companies of this sort are increasing, and we know of some fine work being done in this way.

The Rev. Rex Parkin's company, "Drama Christi," is the smallest and most experienced group we know, and we are deeply indebted to them for the work they are doing in St. Alban's Diocese, their home, and also in the London area and beyond. The Tavistock Deanery Players are another example, and we often hear of them through this magazine.

My own effort in this direction was the forming of a company, "The Commoners," for the production of *Sons of Adam*. This little group made, I think, quite a promising start and received an encouraging welcome and requests for return visits. But it

suffered from frequent changes of cast and no permanent home base, though St. Martin's-in-the-Fields generously gave us rehearsal room. I am sure there is a growing need for such a company in London, but it should belong to a church or organization, and work as a team with a long-term policy.

Lecturers

I must say a word in appreciation of the lecturers who help us, particularly Freda Collins, Elisabeth Heward, Helen Lamb, the Rev. John Mortimer, Lyn Oxenford, the Rev. Douglas Remington, R. H. Ward, and of course Pamela Keily.

We call upon them from time to time for all kinds of work, and their help is invaluable.

SUMMER SCHOOL, YORK

St. John's College, August 27th—September 5th, 1949

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Have you applied for an Application Form? If not, why not?

Write NOW, or it may be too late.

Plans are well advanced for this course and we have a splendid team of tutors. There will be seven full-time resident staff instead of four as in former years, so we can increase the range and variety of subjects.

The additional two days will give us more time for work and leisure, and we intend to make full use of the unique opportunity offered by a visit to the City of York.

I recently spent a short time there and was greatly impressed by its dignity and beauty. The glories of the Minster are rightly famous and St. John's College is quite near, just outside the city walls to the north, with a wonderful view of the Minster. But many do not realize that the city possesses several Medieval churches of great beauty, besides Guild Halls and other historic treasures.

We hope to arrange a lecture and perhaps a conducted tour on Old York Theatre History, full attention being paid to the famous cycle of the York Mysteries.

A visit to a theatre is also on the programme and music will play an important part in the course.

St. John's College will provide ample space for all our needs and single study-bedrooms for everyone. I was able to see the students' Lecture Theatre in action for a rehearsal of *The Zeal of Thy House*, and I could visualize the use to which we shall put it during the School. It has a small but excellently equipped stage.

Last but not least, the Principal, the Rev. P. J. Lamb, showed me their fine chapel, which will of course be the centre of the life of the School.

May I remind readers that as a proportion of vacancies are reserved for teachers and youth organizers (who will receive grant-aid through the Ministry of Education), there will be less space available for our members and friends. It is, therefore, important that you apply in good time. Please tell your friends now, remembering that we shall especially welcome the presence of *more men*.

The fees are remarkably low, 6½ guineas for members, 7½ guineas for non-members —the same as last year, in spite of the extra days and larger staff.

Application Forms are available at the R.D.S. Office (S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C. 2).

COME TO YORK

CARINA ROBINS.

LIBRARY

Plays added to the Library

Bethlehem. RUTLAND BOUGHTON, J. Curwen & Sons, 1920, 16/-. Full Vocal Score. A Choral Drama. The Libretto adapted from the *Coventry Nativity Play*. (Fee: apply composer.)

New Wine. ISABEL S. SQUIRES, Methodist Youth Dept., 1949, 1/6. 8 m., 3 w. 1 hr. An Easter or Whitsuntide Play. Reviewed in *Christian Drama*, No. III. (Fee: 2/6.)

The Journey. A Play created by a Group in Community House, Glasgow, under the direction of Oliver Marlow Wilkinson. Preface by E. MARTIN BROWNE R.D.S., 1949, 2/6. Large cast. Ten scenes. 1¼ hrs. Subject matter from Acts xvi. Production notes. (Fees: 15/-, 10/-.)

Man is Omega. NORA RATCLIFF, New Plays Quarterly, 1948, 1/8. 8 characters, 1 act, 25 mins. The universal state in A.D. 2099 is cast in the form of neutral efficiency without ideals. The poet, typifying man as the Creator conceived him, having discovered an ancient Book, speaks the forbidden word "Love". (Fee: £1. 1s.)

Shadow and Substance. PAUL VINCENT CARROLL, S. French Ltd., 1944, 4/-. 6 m., 4 w., 4 acts, 1 set, full length. Present-day Ireland. The sophisticated Canon and the sceptical schoolmaster are at daggers drawn, but unite in honouring the simple faith of the little maid in the parochial house who has visions of St. Bridget. (Fees: £5. 5s., £4. 4s.)

The following plays are published by Edinburgh House Press:—

The Boyhood of a Saint. (Sadhu Sundar Singh.) LUCY BARNE, 1947, 9d. 13 characters, 2 acts. An Indian play for young people.

A Palace of Gold. M. R. WRAY, 1948, 4d. Large cast of various ages, 30 mins. A pageant of India.

Greater Love Hath No Man. BERYL BROWN, 1947, 3d. 6 b., 6 g., over 11 years, 30 mins. A Chinese Easter play.

The Happy Hour. RICHARD PATTERSON, 1948, 9d. 1 m., 1 w., 8 children, 40 mins. A children's play about Africa.

The Magic Spectacles. BERYL BROWN, 1948, 3d. 10 characters, voice. For girls and boys from 8 to 11 years, 20 mins. A play about Missionary giving.

All the above plays are on the recommended list.

Reference Books

Costume Design and Making. A Practical Handbook. MARY FERNALD and E. SHENTON, A. & C. Black, reprint 1948, 10/6. Twenty-four illustrations from contemporary sources and 51 pages of design. Includes suggestions for suitable colours and textures for different periods, building up a costume plot, and the effect of lighting on costume. The patterned diagrams deal with English costume from Saxon times to nineteenth century.

Curtains for Stage Settings. FRANK NAPIER, F. Muller Ltd., 2nd Edition, 1949, 7/6. Practical guide to the use of curtains and their necessary adjuncts. Numerous diagrams.

Group Playmaking. MARY KELLY. Foreword, RODNEY BENNETT. Illustrations BRUCE ROBERTS, G. G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1948, 6/-. A stimulating account of Group Playmaking in Devonshire, including some of the thirty plays acted and made by groups with which the author has been associated.

Historic Costumes for the Stage. LUCY BARTON, H. & C. Black, 1949, 35/-. Colour Frontispiece and 76 pages of drawings by DAVID SARVIS. From 4000 B.C. to twentieth century. Nineteen chapters trace the development of dress from Ancient Egypt and Biblical times, through Greece, Rome, Byzantium, and nine countries of Europe; the twentieth chapter deals with practical problems of the wardrobe and workshop. (For use in Library only.)

Little Plays Handbook. LAURENCE HOUSMAN, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1927, 6/-. Practical notes for producers.

Sets added to the Library

According to the Scriptures. ELISABETH HEWARD (typescript).

A Change for the Worse. JAMES BRIDIE (typescript).

The Journey. OLIVER M. WILKINSON.

The Real St. George. RODNEY BENNETT.

The Summoning of Everyman. Modern Version. H. W. PAYNE.

Thomas Cramner of Canterbury. CHARLES WILLIAMS.

Important Notice to Borrowers of Sets

The rapidly increasing demand for sets makes it necessary to ask borrowers to give fourteen days' notice when booking. In order to save time and labour one or two alternative titles should always be given. The librarian will continue to deal with cases of real emergency when possible.

Sets are primarily intended for readings as the resources of the Library do not permit of their use for productions. Exceptions are made in cases of out-of-date or very expensive plays.

Will members please note that the LIBRARY WILL BE CLOSED for Stocktaking from MAY 30th to JUNE 13th, and no books can be issued during that time. It will greatly assist the Librarian if members will kindly return all books they are not using before May 30th.

STOP PRESS

At the Annual General Meeting of Members on March 24th the Executive Committee's four Resolutions, as set out in the recent circular and supported by the recommendation of the Council, were unanimously adopted. What their implementation will mean to the Society's future will be discussed in our next issue.

CHRISTIAN DRAMA is the quarterly magazine of the RELIGIOUS DRAMA SOCIETY. *President*: The Lord Bishop of Chichester. *Chairman of Executive*: E. Martin Browne. *Chairman of Council*: Miss Athene Seyler. *Travelling Adviser*: Miss Carina Robins. *Librarian*: Miss K. Bainbridge-Bell. *Secretary*: T. G. Bartholomew. All enquiries and applications for membership should be addressed to The Secretary, R.D.S., S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2.

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